

**Statement of Patricia de Stacy Harrison
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Before the Subcommittee on Homeland Security, House Committee on Appropriations
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Chairwoman Roybal-Allard, Ranking Member Fleischmann, and distinguished members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me to submit this testimony on behalf of America's public media service — 1,500 public television and radio stations reaching 99 percent of the American people. The Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB) requests \$40 million in FY 2023 for the Next Generation Warning System (NGWS) within the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). CPB is grateful for the strong funding support of this grant program in FY 2022. Sustained support will reinforce and extend public media's contributions to public safety and enhance alerting and warning capabilities that benefit all Americans.

While media and content delivery have changed, public broadcasting remains a trusted source for fact-based information. Local stations' broadcast infrastructure provides not only the educational and informational content Americans expect from public media, but emergency alerting and communications services at the national, state, and local levels. Often unnoticed until times of emergency, these services direct people to safety and transmit messages from these emergency management and public safety officials. The grant support will enable national public media organizations and local stations to continue to meet the infrastructure resilience requirements that ensures reliable, always-ready public safety communication systems.

Nationally, the public television interconnection system serves as a distribution point for PBS WARN, an essential part of FEMA's nationwide Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA) system. The WEA system relies upon public broadcasters to ensure the delivery of messages that include

imminent threats to life and safety, AMBER alerts, and Presidential alerts during a national emergency. Between March 12, 2020 and January 18, 2022, more than 13,091 WEAs were issued by state and local authorities and transmitted over the PBS WARN system.

Approximately 644 of those alerts were for COVID-19, harnessing the reach and ubiquity of mobile device communications to address a pandemic for the first time.

Additionally, PBS leverages its contributions to the WEA system and offers the *Eyes on IPAWS* tool to provide public safety officials with increased transparency of issued alerts. The utility of Eyes on IPAWS was recognized by the FCC's Communications, Security, Reliability, and Interoperability Council's (CSRIC) VII in 2020. The CSRIC report states, "Alert Originators, emergency managers, and any other stakeholders can use Eyes on IPAWS to determine active WEAs nationwide; confirm transmission of issued WEAs; gain awareness of WEAs issued by other agencies; view alerts based on location, alert type, or date; and analyze the impact of WEAs using the data from Eyes on IPAWS in after-action analysis."

The public radio interconnection system, Public Radio Satellite System® (PRSS), managed by NPR, receives a national EAS feed directly from FEMA and distributes Presidential emergency alerts to 1,247 public radio stations nationwide, including NPR member and non-member stations. PRSS is also named as a resource in at least 20 states' emergency plans and many of the public radio stations in these 20 states serve as Primary Entry Point (PEP) stations. The PRSS national network of nearly 400 interconnected public radio stations supports secure, reliable communications during emergencies without relying on the Internet, which may be off-line during emergencies.

Stations' infrastructure also provides for public safety services tailored to the needs of their local communities. In times of disaster, enabled public radio stations use MetaPub

technology to deliver graphic alerts and messages such as weather forecasts and shelter information. For example, California stations successfully tested MetaPub alerting during the Great California Shakeout earthquake drill in 2016 and demonstrated how stations could bring emergency communications to affected audiences. In the Quad Cities region, WVIK-FM is the primary relay station for emergency information concerning the Exelon Quad Cities nuclear power generating station. In the event of an emergency at the nuclear plant, the Rock Island County, Illinois, Emergency Management Agency, contacts WVIK station personnel, and the station will broadcast the EMA message. MetaPub was also used during the pandemic to direct viewers and listeners to local resources and the latest public health guidelines.

In rural and remote areas, public media is often the only source of local news and public safety information, and native-owned public media stations serve some of the most remote and least connected areas in the nation. These stations partner with the tribal governments, local public safety officials, local health agencies, and Regional Bureau of Indian Affairs offices to distribute essential health and safety information. Without stations' broadcast infrastructure, many Americans, especially those in rural areas, would lack access to lifesaving information and public safety alerts.

Public media's public safety capabilities are valued and utilized by local, state, and federal public safety officials. Over the past two years, NC PBS partnered with the NC Department of Public Safety to provide live English and Spanish broadcasts and livestreams of emergency news conferences from the State Emergency Operations Center. Last year, the livestreamed briefings received 2.3 million views across NC PBS' online distribution platforms. In California, public television stations partner with the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (OES) on "Listos California," a statewide emergency preparedness

campaign. The partnership produced “What a Disaster,” an engaging emergency preparedness program, which challenges three Southern California families to test their emergency readiness plans in the event of the next wildfire, earthquake, flood, or another disaster.

While public media stations are dedicated to serving the needs of their communities, their ability to provide many life-saving public safety services relies on aging infrastructure, which has often surpassed its expected end-of-life. In 2017, CPB commissioned a comprehensive System Technology Assessment to better understand public media stations’ technology needs. This Assessment projected that the system’s financial capacity to address equipment repair and replacement would see a cumulative shortfall of more than \$300 million by 2020. While CPB does not have an updated system assessment, there is every reason to believe that the financial challenges that stations face in meeting their equipment needs have only grown. Without resources to maintain and replace broadcast transmission infrastructure on schedule, stations have started to experience equipment failures that restrict or suspend their broadcasting capabilities, including the essential public safety services these stations provide.

Funding of the Next Generation Warning System (NGWS) will address the need for resilient public safety infrastructure. The NGWS grant program would allow public broadcasting entities to procure, construct and improve transmission and other public safety-related equipment and services that secure and strengthen public media’s role in helping protect American communities. Ms. Chairwoman and members of the subcommittee, thank you for allowing me, on behalf of America’s public media system, to submit this testimony. I appreciate your consideration of this important funding request.